



# Rhode Island Department of Health

3 Capitol Hill, Providence, RI 02908 | [www.health.ri.gov](http://www.health.ri.gov)

For: Immediate release

Date: March 6, 2020

Contact: [Joseph Wendelken](mailto:Joseph.Wendelken@health.ri.gov) (401-378-0704)

## **RIDOH's State Health Laboratories Identifies Third Case of COVID-19**

The Rhode Island Department of Health (RIDOH)'s State Health Laboratories has confirmed an additional presumptive positive case of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19). This person is a female in her 60s. She is at home with mild symptoms. This person was tested because she was symptomatic and had direct, face-to-face contact with a person with confirmed COVID-19 in New York in late February.

This case is considered a presumptive positive case until it is confirmed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Extensive contact tracing is being done on this case. All people who have had direct, face-to-face contact with this person are being instructed to self-quarantine. People who had contact with an asymptomatic person who is now self-quarantining (but does not have COVID-19) are considered low risk. (In other words, a contact of a contact is considered low risk.)

Contact tracing includes children and adults associated with Smithfield Avenue Nursery in Pawtucket, where this person works. Initial studies of COVID-19 indicate that the virus does not affect children as severely as adults.

This case is Rhode Island's third confirmed positive or presumptive positive case of COVID-19. A man in his 40s and a teenage girl who both went on a trip to Italy in mid-February as part of a Saint Raphael Academy group tested positive. (This count of two does not include another adult who went on the trip and who tested positive but is considered a Massachusetts case because she is a Massachusetts resident. Additionally, a staff member from Achievement First Academy in Providence who went on the trip was tested, but her results were negative.)

### Additional updates

- RIDOH officials held a call with the leadership of nursing homes throughout Rhode Island today to discuss enhanced measures to protect residents. RIDOH asked all facilities to, as of tomorrow morning or sooner:

- Restrict visitor hours.
  - Not allow people to visit if they are younger than 18 years of age or are feeling sick or experiencing any of the following symptoms: cough, fever, chills, runny nose, stuffy nose, sore throat, or shortness of breath.
  - Actively screen staff, visitors, vendors, and all other people who enter facilities for illness and COVID-19 risks (i.e., travel history, or exposure to someone under investigation for COVID-19). People who have traveled internationally in the last 14 days will be asked to not enter facilities.
  - Only allow residents to leave for medical appointments (as opposed to nonessential appointments, such as an appointment with a hairdresser or a visit to a family member). This is a way to limit the possibility that a resident will get ill and bring that illness back into the facility.
- As a state with COVID-19 cases, Rhode Island has received an immediate \$500,000 dollars in federal funds to support public health response actions such as epidemiological work, laboratory work and supplies, risk communications support, and other activities related to public health emergency operations. Additional federal appropriations are being considered.

Data updates

- Number of Rhode Island COVID-19 positive (including presumptive positive) cases: 3  
 This number does not include a Massachusetts resident who the Massachusetts Department of Public Health reported as having a presumptive positive test result. This individual went on the Saint Raphael Academy trip to Italy in mid-February.
- Number of people who had negative test results at RIDOH’s State Health Laboratories: 17
- Number of people for whom tests are pending: 13
- Number of people who are currently instructed to self-quarantine in Rhode Island because they had direct contact with a person with COVID-19: approximately 210 (RIDOH is sharing an approximate number because this number is subject to change regularly)

Testing in Rhode Island is being done at RIDOH’s State Health Laboratories. Confirmatory testing is being done by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Positive results are considered ‘presumptive’ if they still need to be confirmed by the CDC.

Key messages for the public

- **Although Rhode Island has the testing capacity it needs, people without symptoms should not be tested for COVID-19. Testing individuals with no symptoms is not recommended by CDC.**
- If you were with someone who does not have symptoms, the risk of transmission is very low.
- There are many respiratory illnesses circulating in Rhode Island, such as the flu and the common cold. Having respiratory symptoms does not mean that you have COVID-19.
- People are at higher risk for COVID-19 if they have symptoms of the virus (cough, fever, shortness of breath) AND if they were a contact of a positive case of COVID-19 (or have traveled to country with community transmission, such as China, Italy, South Korea, Iran, and Japan).
- Someone is considered a contact if they have had direct, face-to-face contact with a person with COVID-19.
- People who think they have COVID-19 should call their healthcare provider. These people should not go directly to a healthcare facility without first calling a healthcare provider (unless they are experiencing a medical emergency).
- People with general questions about COVID-19 can visit [www.health.ri.gov/covid](http://www.health.ri.gov/covid) or call **401-222-8022**. **This is the COVID-19 Hotline** that RIDOH has available to the public.
- Everyone can help stop the spread of viruses in Rhode Island.
  - Get your flu shot, and make sure the people around you do the same.
  - Wash your hands often throughout the day. Use warm water and soap. If soap and water are not available, use alcohol-based hand gel.
  - Cough or sneeze into your elbow. Viruses can spread by coughing or sneezing on other people or into your hands.
  - Stay home from work or school if you are sick.
  - Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth. Germs spread this way.
  - Get plenty of sleep, be physically active, manage your stress, drink plenty of fluids, and eat nutritious foods.
  - Keep surfaces (especially bedside tables, surfaces in the bathroom, and toys for children) clean by wiping them down with a household disinfectant.